

## Before, On, and After

As D'varim is always read on the Shabbat before Tish'a b'Av, so too is Va'etchanan always read on the Shabbat after Tish'a b'Av. More - the beginning of Va'etchanan is read in the afternoon of the Shabbat before Tish'a b'Av (and sometimes, as it is this year, on the Monday morning before Tish'a b'Av) and part of Va'etchanan is read on Tish'a b'Av morning.

Va'etchanan is very much associated with Tish'a b'Av.

The review of the Sin of the Spies in Parshat D'varim serves as an introduction to Tish'a b'Av, in line with the Mishna's (Taanit 4:6) statement that the first of five calamities that occurred on the 9th of Av was the decree upon the adult male population of the Generation of the Midbar to die out during forty years of wandering (as a result of the panic that followed the report of the spies).

The portion of Va'etchanan which we read on Tish'a b'Av morning is a stern warning against idolatry - which was the major cause of the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash - which, of course, is the "main feature" of Tish'a b'Av's black character (until things change with the Geula).

But Va'etchanan also shows us the hope and pathway to a new beginning. It

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**Jerusalem** Shabbat times for **Va'etchanan/Nachamu**  
**7:06pm** (plag: **6:15**) / **8:22pm** (see page 3 for other zmanim)

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## Word of the Month

Most people will have already said Kiddush L'vana by now - either before Tish'a b'Av (according to Minhag Yerushalayim) or on Motza'ei Tish'a b'Av according to the more common custom. (Some purposely wait until the night following the 10th of Av, because the 10th - until midday - is part of the mourning period.) For those who have not said KL yet, the last opportunity is Sunday night (eve of TU b'Av), July 25th (meaning until dawn of Monday). This close to the deadline, one should not wait for Motza"Sh.



Candles (earliest)	<b>Nachamu</b>	Havdala	Next week
7:06pm (6:15)	Yerushalayim	8:22pm	7:02 (6:12) 8:17
7:23pm (6:17)	S'derot	8:24pm	7:19 (6:14) 8:18
7:21pm (6:16)	Gush Etzion	8:22pm	7:17 (6:12) 8:17
7:24pm (6:18)	Raanana	8:25pm	7:19 (6:14) 8:19
7:22pm (6:16)	Beit Shemesh	8:23pm	7:18 (6:13) 8:18
7:23pm (6:17)	Rehovot	8:24pm	7:19 (6:14) 8:19
7:24pm (6:18)	Netanya	8:25pm	7:19 (6:14) 8:20
7:20pm (6:16)	Be'er Sheva	8:23pm	7:15 (6:13) 8:17
7:22pm (6:17)	Modi'in	8:24pm	7:18 (6:13) 8:18
7:06pm (6:17)	Petach Tikva	8:24pm	7:02 (6:14) 8:19
7:06pm (6:15)	Maale Adumim	8:22pm	7:02 (6:12) 8:17
7:23pm (6:17)	Ginot Shomron	8:24pm	7:18 (6:13) 8:18
7:22pm (6:16)	Gush Shiloh	8:23pm	7:17 (6:12) 8:17
7:21pm (6:16)	K4 & Hevron	8:22pm	7:17 (6:12) 8:17
7:22pm (6:16)	Giv'at Ze'ev	8:23pm	7:17 (6:12) 8:17
7:23pm (6:17)	Yad Binyamin	8:24pm	7:18 (6:13) 8:19
7:24pm (6:18)	Ashkelon	8:25pm	7:19 (6:14) 8:19
7:13pm (6:16)	Tzfat	8:24pm	7:08 (6:13) 8:19
7:24pm (6:18)	Zichron Yaakov	8:26pm	7:19 (6:14) 8:20

Rabbeinu Tam havdala for Va'etchanan/Nachamu - 9:04pm

**Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI 10-19 Menachem Av (July 21-30)**

Earliest Talit & T'filin	4:51-4:58am
Sunrise	5:48-5:54am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:23-8:27am)	9:16-9:19am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:50-9:53am)	10:26-10:28am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	12:45½-12:45½pm
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	1:21-1:20pm
Plag Mincha	6:16-6:11½pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 7:42-7:37pm)	7:48-7:42pm

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## LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

takes us back to the beginning of nationhood, before some of our early "mistakes".

Out of chronological order, after telling us about the sin of the spies and the harsh decree upon that generation (the adult male population thereof), this week's sedra brings us back to Sinai and we re-experience Matan Torah again.

Maybe we can learn from the past. Maybe this time, we won't get into trouble with the golden calf. Maybe we won't complain about the manna. Maybe we won't let the Meraglim panic us into turning our backs to G-d.

Can that happen? Do we get another chance for all of those things?

The answer is - yes, always. That's the mechanism of T'shuva. Repentance cannot actually erase what we have done, nor can it erase what our ancestors did. But we can react better to similar kinds of situations, having learned from our past deeds and their repercussions and from the deeds of previous generations and the repercussions of their deeds.

The important thing is that Moshe Rabeinu is giving us a hopeful opportunity to start over and get things right.

One of the glitches in the above is that the people who heard Moshe's words in those last 37 days of his life, didn't use their opportunity efficiently and, as Tanach records, there was plenty of further rebellion and back-sliding, and breach of faith with G-d, and too many et ceteras to list them here. So what's

the point?

The point is that we, today, are being addressed by Moshe Rabeinu via the book of D'varim, and we have the challenge to respond properly.

Perek 4 - And now Israel, listen and understand the laws and statutes that I, Moshe, am teaching you - in order that you (we) will live and come and settle the Land...

Our response. Okay to that. We will. We've learned our lessons.

Warning: You saw what happened to those who turned to idolatry. Bad news. Okay, we finally get the point.

Remember this; avoid that. Especially since we are not hearing these words for the first time, but have thousands of years of history to learn from, we are in that special place of NOW and we know what we have to do. (Of course, past generations also were in this position - but that's in the past; we are the CHAYIM KUL'CHEM HAYOM. We are alive today and we know what we must do.

KI TOLID BANIM... When we have been in the Land for generations and become corrupt... No! We mustn't let that happen again.

We have been shown (history) in order to know that HaShem is G-d; there is no other besides Him!

Va'etchanan, with its Aseret HaDibrot and its Sh'ma, and its many inspiring, beautiful p'sukim, encourages us. Let's take the challenge and succeed.

### Parsha Points to Ponder Va'etchanan • Nachamu

- 1) Why does Moshe ask G-D to let him cross into Israel AND SEE (V'ER-EH) (3:25)? Once he was crossing in, of course he would see it!
- 2) Why does the Torah command DO NOT LESSEN (LO TIGRA'U) from laws of the Torah (4:2)? This is simply a repeat teaching that we should observe all laws, so why is it necessary?
- 3) Why does the Torah say to observe Shabbat AS G-D COM- MANDED YOU (5:12)? Isn't obvious that the command to observe Shabbat in the Torah would mean to follow the commands of G-D regarding Shabbat?

#### Parsha Points to Ponder by Rabbi Dov Lipman

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Answers are somewhere else in this issue  
Look for them, but only after a good pondering

# Va'etchanan

45th of 54 sedras;  
2nd of 11 in D'varim

Written on 249 lines  
in a Sefer Torah, rank: 7th

21 Parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed, rank: 7th (tied)

122 p'sukim - ranks 17th (2nd in D'varim)  
same as Vayak'hel & Ki Tavo; Va'etchanan is larger

1878 words; ranks 10th (2nd in D'varim)

7343 letters; ranks 10th (2nd in D'varim)

Va'etchanan's p'sukim are longer than average,  
hence the jump from 17th to 10th in rank.

## MITZVOT

12 of 613 mitzvot, 8 positive and 4 prohibitions  
and many more that are counted elsewhere -  
this is so for several sedras, but it really shows  
for Va'etchanan (e.g. Aseret HaDibrot)

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

Numbers in [square brackets] are the  
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND  
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI  
(positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y  
is the perek and pasuk from which the  
mitzva comes.

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start  
of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively.  
X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the  
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the  
parsha.

# Kohen - First Aliya

## 11 p'sukim - 3:23-4:4

[S> 3:23 (7)] Moshe Rabeinu  
continues his farewell words to  
the People. He tells them that he  
had asked G-d to rescind His  
decree banning Moshe from entry  
into the Land of Israel.

**SDT:** *The Baal Shem Tov commented  
that Moshe, who had learned the entire  
Torah, Written Word and Oral Law, from  
G-d Himself, used the term "You have  
begun to show me Your greatness..." The  
more one learns Torah, the more one  
learns about G-d, the more one will  
realize that he has just begun to  
understand Who G-d is.*

G-d refused this request and  
forbade Moshe to ask again.  
Moshe ascended a mountain from  
where he saw the Land. G-d then  
told him to transfer the authority  
of leadership to Yehoshua.

[P> 4:1 (24)] He (Moshe)  
proceeds to review the laws and  
statutes (Torah and mitzvot) by  
which the people are now to  
live... in Eretz Yisrael.

Neither should the Torah be  
added to nor detracted from [these  
mitzvot are counted elsewhere].

Another warning against idolatry  
follows. Then, "And you who  
cling to G-d are all alive today".  
(The Gemara teaches that this is one  
of the many references to T'CHIYAT  
HAMEITIM in the Torah.)

**KNOW UNTIL**

# MitzvaWatch

The twin prohibitions of neither  
adding nor subtracting from the  
Torah, are mentioned in Va'etchanan  
and again in R'ei (where they are  
counted among the 613). The Vilna  
Gaon points out that the plural form  
is used one time and the singular form  
is used in the other case. This, he says,  
alludes to two different aspects of  
these prohibitions. It is forbidden to  
add to or subtract from a particular  
mitzva - for example, one may not  
take 5 species or 3 species on Sukkot  
for the fulfillment of the mitzva of  
"Lulav & Etrog". Nor may one add or  
subtract to the total of the mitzvot.  
To treat a Rabbinic mitzva as a Torah  
law, or vice versa, would be an  
example of the other aspect of these  
prohibitions.

The spirit of these prohibitions (if not  
the actual definitions) would include  
treating (and/or teaching) a CHUMRA  
as if it were required, or vice versa  
(claiming that something that is  
prohibited is "only" a chumra or  
custom). Aside from people who  
intentionally do this (very wrong), it is  
more common to find people doing it  
one way or the other inadvertently,  
either because of ignorance or  
because of a sincere (but slightly  
misguided) desire to enhance the  
observance of mitzvot. This is  
especially important for parents and  
teachers of young children.

Don't say ASUR if you mean, strictly  
speaking it isn't actually forbidden, but  
it is considered a proper thing to

abstain for doing such and such. It  
sounds more complicated, but it is  
more "honest" and therefore it is the  
more proper way to transmit Torah  
to your children and students.  
(Obviously, when a child is very  
young, you have to simplify matters.  
But don't forget to upgrade the child's  
level of understanding as he or she  
grows older.)

# Levi - Second Aliya

## 36 p'sukim - 4:5-40

Once again, Moshe emphasizes  
that the mitzvot are meant to be  
kept in Eretz Yisrael. (This not only  
applies to Land-related mitzvot, but to  
the entire range of mitzvot.)

There is repeated reference in the  
book of D'varim, and especially in  
Parshat Va'etchanan, to Eretz Yisrael  
being THE reason for our having been  
taken out of Egypt, formed into a  
Nation, and given the Torah and  
mitzvot.

Prolonged exile has taught us that the  
Torah can be kept, must be kept, no  
matter where a Jew finds himself. This  
was one of the reasons that the Torah  
was given at Sinai, prior to entry into  
the Land. On the other hand, one  
should not lose sight of the fact,  
repeated often by Moshe Rabeinu in  
D'varim, that G-d has always intended  
us to observe His mitzvot IN THE  
LAND OF ISRAEL. Are there more  
mitzvot to keep in Israel than outside?  
YES. But maybe more significantly,  
every mitzva - even those that are

performed all over the world, can reach their full potential **ONLY** in Israel. This is a message that each of us has to realize, understand, and internalize. Then we must spread this message to family and friends abroad who feel that they "have everything we need to be fully Jewish" in their respective religious communities around the world. **AND** the vital significance of Torah **AND** Israel to our lives as Jews must be taught to those less committed Jews here in Israel and abroad.

On the other hand, we must not forget that Israel today is not the realization of The Dream, but rather a step on the road to the Complete Redemption, the restoration of Zion and Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, and the coming of Mashiach. This idea helps us refocus after the mourning period that ends with the 10th of Av, and is an appropriate theme to usher in the period of consolation and T'shuva.

We must be careful to preserve and perform the mitzvot because (among other reasons) it is the mitzvot that project Judaism as an intelligent religion to the nations of the world. This in turn, sanctifies G-d's Name. We must be infinitely careful to remember and transmit to our children, the "Sinai Experience".

Moshe describes for the new generation the details of Matan Torah. He includes a specific warning against the potentially idolatrous thoughts caused by the

combination of the magnificent, tangible universe in which we live and the invisible, intangible G-d.

A primary cause of idolatry is the natural human tendency to relate better to something concrete, visible, tangible rather than something abstract and intangible. The Sun is in the sky. It's hot, full of energy, gives us light, and sustains life as we know it. People found Sun-worship easier to accept than the worship of He Who created the Sun and everything else, but cannot be seen. True worship of the One G-d was what Avraham and Sara taught many people. And, as **OR LAGOYIM**, a light unto the nations, it is what we are supposed to teach and show the world.

G-d had taken us out of Egypt in order to make us His Nation. He got angry at me, says Moshe, and forbade me to enter the Land. Again, Moshe warns the People against abandoning the covenant with G-d after his (Moshe's) passing.

**[P> 4:25 (16)]** The next portion is read on Tish'a b'Av morning... In spite of the many warnings against idolatry, Moshe prophesies (predicts) that there will come a time when the People will turn from G-d and be exiled from their Land. It will then come to pass that the People will seek out G-d and return to Him. Moshe emphasizes the uniqueness of the People of Israel and their special relationship with G-d and

beseeches the People to remain faithful to Torah and mitzvot. One can hear a pleading in his voice, as if he is begging the people not to go in the direction of his prophecy.

This theme is oft-repeated in the Torah. Do what G-d asks of you. Don't turn away from Him. If you remain faithful to Him, wonderful things will happen to and for you. If you turn away from Him, terrible things will happen. You will turn away from Him; terrible things will happen; and then you will turn back to Him... The Torah keeps presenting this to us, many times. Sometimes it is long & heavy (Tochacha) and sometimes shorter and milder. And we read through the entire Torah in a year and we read the Torah year after year, and we hear the prophecies and the challenges and the commandments.

## **Shlishi** - Third Aliya 9 p'sukim - 4:41-49

**[P> 4:41 (9)]** Although the cities of refuge will not function as such until conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael, Moshe (with enthusiasm to do G-d's bidding, even though he knows what's coming soon thereafter) designates the 3 cities on the East Bank - Betzer in the Mishor Wilderness area for Reuven, Ramot in the Gil'ad area for Gad, and Golan in the Bashan area for Menashe.

These (the mitzvot about to be

presented) were taught by Moshe to the People following the Exodus in the lands on the East Bank of the Jordan.

(Note the detail in the description of the location of the people, the repetition of their successes in conquering the "east bank" lands. It seems meant to be encouraging to the people.)

**V'zot HaTorah...** said when the Torah is lifted, comes from D'varim 4:44. In the Siddur, the words **AL PI HASHEM B'YAD MOSHE** are added. That phrase appears four times in Bamidbar, but 9:23 seems to be the one from which it is taken.

## **R'VI'** - Fourth Aliya 18 p'sukim - 5:1-18

**[P> 5:1 (5)]** Moshe begins the review of mitzvot with a restatement of the Aseret HaDibrot. He emphasizes that the Covenant at Sinai was not just between G-d and the previous generation, but between G-d and all generations of Jews to come.

## **MitzvaWatch**

The most well-known difference between the two presentations of the Aseret HaDibrot is Shabbat's "Shamor v'Zachor". (See more on pages 23-24.) Generally, "Zachor" is interpreted as referring to the positive mitzvot and aspects of Shabbat, whereas "Shamor" is a command to preserve Shabbat by not violating the prohibitions. The traditional minimum of two Shabbat

candles (although one candle satisfies the halacha), are said to represent these two facets of Shabbat. It is this intertwined nature of the positive aspects of Shabbat and its prohibitions that is "responsible" for Kiddush on Friday night being obligatory upon women. Rather than treat Kiddush as a pure "time-related positive mitzva" which would (probably) mean that women would be exempt (as they are from the mitzva of Sukka, for example), we view Kiddush as part of the whole Shabbat package, which means full and equal obligation for men and women. The two sides of Shabbat were commanded B'DIBUR ECHAD and are inseparable.

On a hashkafa level, we can see the prohibitions of Shabbat as more than a restrictive list of DON'Ts. Abstinence from Melacha can be seen as Dayan Grunfeld z"l puts it in The Sabbath -- as laying G-d's gifts of creative activity to us at His feet (so to speak) in homage to the Creator and Master of All. This, on a weekly basis, so that we will not take these gifts for granted nor assume that our abilities and talents are self-produced. There is a subtle difference between not doing Melacha and abstaining from Melacha. If we understand and appreciate the distinction, our Shabbat observance and enjoyment can be greatly enhanced.

## MitzvaWatch

The Aseret HaDibrot in Yitro contains 14 of the 613 mitzvot. (The 2nd commandment has four prohibitions related to idolatry, the 4th has two mitzvot related to Shabbat, and

one each from the other 8.) The first 9 commandments in Va'etchanan contain the same 13 mitzvot as their counterparts in Yitro. Those mitzvot are counted from Yitro. The 10th is worded differently here and is counted separately (in addition to "Thou shalt not covet") as the prohibition of "lust and unhealthy desire" [416,L266 5:18]. Although the first part of the tenth commandment uses the term LO TACHMOD (covet), the second part introduces a new term which deals exclusively with thoughts and feelings; its counterpart in Yitro involves acting on those feelings. V'LO TIT'AVEH in a way, completes a set of prohibitions, that starts with obviously sinful acts - murder, stealing, etc. to a feeling in the heart (LO TACHMOD) which can, and often does, lead to acts which are "milder", but nonetheless "problematic". For example, if a person is jealous of a friend's pocket computer, and comments about it often enough, the friend might just feel uncomfortable enough to give it to the jealous friend. Nothing wrong, per se, in complimenting someone's PC, but in this case it is part of the prohibition of LO TACHMOD. And V'LO TIT'AVEH is the feelings even without anything else happening as a result of the envy.

The Aseret HaDibrot lay out in the following manner:

[S>5:6 (5)] Anochi and Lo Yih-yeh L'cha, which we consider the first two "dibrot" are contained within a single parsha s'tuma. [S>5:11 (1)] The prohibition

against taking G-d's name in vain (vain oaths) is its own parsha s'tuma. [S> 5:12 (4)] The Shabbat commandment is its own parsha s'tuma. Shabbat's commandment is a Parsha P'tucha in Yitro. [S> 5:16 (1)] Honoring parents is a s'tuma. [S> 5:17 (¼)] Do not murder, [S> 5:17 (¼)] And do not commit adultery, [S> 5:17 (¼)] And do not steal (kidnap), [S> 5:17 (¼)] And do not bear false witness. These four dibrot are each a separate parsha s'tuma, all in the same pasuk! [S> 5:18 (½)] And do not covet another man's wife and [S>5:18 (½)] and do not lust after anything that another person possesses are each a s'tuma, from the same pasuk, and counting as a single (the 10th) dibra (or dibur).

## Chamishi 5th Aliya 15 p'sukim - 5:19-6:3

[S> 5:19 (15)] Moshe next reminds the People that those who were present at Matan Torah were afraid to continue hearing G-d's Voice and agreed to listen to the words of a prophet speaking in G-d's Name in lieu of direct communication. (Actually, take a look at the pasuk right before the Aseret HaDibrot and you'll see that Moshe Rabeinu was saying the same thing "right up front".)

This episode is crucial to our understanding of the Chain of Tradition and

the method of transmission of the Oral Law. It made not only Moshe Rabeinu vital to our hearing and understanding of G-d's Word, but so too the Moshe Rabeinu of every generation. This is so for prophets, during the period of prophecy, and by the Sages throughout the generations. We can say that we have a serious obligation to accept Torah from our parents and teachers, precisely because those that stood at Sinai did not want to hear G-d's voice directly beyond the first two commandments.

Moshe emphasizes that G-d agreed to the People's request.

And yet again, Moshe links observance of mitzvot with the only proper environment for Jewish life - Eretz Yisrael. (This idea is actually expressed in THREE different ways in the final p'sukim of this Aliya.)

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya 22 p'sukim - 6:4-25

[P> 6:4 (6)] The first portion of this Aliya is the first parsha of SH'MA. "...HaShem is One." This statement of Jewish faith is also considered the mitzva to believe in the unity and uniqueness of G-d [417,A2 6:4].

Note that G-d's unity is also part of the mitzva to believe in Him [25,A1 Sh'mot 20:2], but warrants its own mitzva to emphasize this essential element of belief, in contrast to many other religions.

"Love" G-d with your entire being **[418,A3 6:5]**. (Many mitzvot, Jewish practices and the attitude with which we do mitzvot are all considered manifestations of Love of G-d.) We must study and teach Torah **[419,A11 6:7]** (for practical purposes AND purely for the sake of learning). We are to recite the Sh'ma twice daily **[420,A10 6:7]**, wear T'filin on the arm **[421,A13 6:8]** and front-center on the head **[422,A12 6:8]**, and put a Mezuzah on our doorposts **[423,A15 6:9]**.

**SDT:** *The mitzva of learning and teaching Torah can be fulfilled with one's head, one's intellect. Tell someone a Dvar Torah and you both have fulfilled V'SHINANTAM L'VANECHA. But, tell that same Dvar Torah in an animated way that shows love of G-d and that ignites the emotion of the listener, so that he not only adds to his knowledge of Torah, but his excitement and enthusiasm for Torah and Mitzvot has increased, then you have fulfilled an additional mitzva, VAHAVTA ET HASHEM ELOKECHA, to love G-d with all your heart (Sefer HaChareidim).*

*We can generalize this aspect of AHAVAT HASHEM to include all mitzvot. Shabbat, for example. Someone can go through all the motions and not violate the Shabbat; but do it with love and that fulfills VAHAVTA, in addition to Shabbat.*

**[S> 6:10 (6)]** Now we are issued another warning. You'll go into Eretz Yisrael, have big homes filled with all good things, that you did not work for... Still remember that G-d took you out

of Egypt... don't turn away from Him...

It is said that a wealthy person has a harder time with faith in G-d than a poor person. A poor person tends to turn to G-d, to complain, but also to express his faith that his lot will improve. A wealthy person tends towards patting himself on the back and taking credit for that which he should be thanking G-d. (Generalizations, of course, but something to think about, nonetheless.)

**[S> 6:16 (40)]** Do not test G-d... (as you did repeatedly in the Midbar). Understood as the prohibition of overly challenging a true prophet and demanding signs from him (beyond what is reasonable to determine his claim as a true prophet) **[424,L64 6:16]**. Keep the mitzvot... be straight with G-d... so that things will be good for you in Eretz Yisrael... (there it is again!)

**[S> 6:20 (6)]** When your child will ask you tomorrow... tell him "we were slaves to Par'o in Egypt and G-d took us out... and He commanded us... and it will do us good to listen..."

## Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya II p'sukim - 7:1-II

**[S>7:1 (11)]** Finally, Moshe tells the People that the nations in Eretz Yisrael whom we will encounter are mightier than Israel. But G-d will give them over into

Israel's hands. We are required to destroy the "Seven Nations" **[425, A187 7:2]**, not to show mercy to idolaters in the Land **[426,L50 7:2]**, and certainly not to intermarry with them **[427,L52 7:3]** or any other non-Jews.

Regardless of how secure one is in one's belief, intermarriage and other close contact with alien cultures will have an adverse effect upon the individual Jew and on the Jewish People. In addition to the Torah-prohibition against intermarriage, there are many Rabbinic prohibitions geared to restrict social contact with non-Jews.

We must destroy the idolatry in the Land. We must always keep in mind the basis upon which G-d has built His relationship with us.

It is because of G-d's love for us and His promises to our ancestors that He has taken us out of Egypt. Know that G-d is trustworthy to keep His promises and reward those who properly follow His ways, as well as punish those who do not.

The final 3 p'sukim of the sedra are reread for the Maftir.

## Haftara 26 p'sukim Yeshayahu 40:1-26

First of the 7 Haftarot of Consolation, (all of which come from Yeshayahu). Yeshayahu as a prophet of destruction and Divine punishment for faithlessness, can

be seen in ch.1 which was the haftara last Shabbat, and in subsequent chapters through 39. With our haftara this week, ch. 40, we see another side of the prophet. G-d commands the prophets (through Yeshayahu) to bring the message of comfort and the end of Babylonian captivity. How appropriate a choice as the haftara for the Shabbat following 9'Av.

Moshe Rabeinu expressed concern that the people might look to nature and turn various items they see into objects of worship. Perhaps it might not be a bad idea to minimize our interest and study of nature and science, to avoid the dangers to which Moshe was alerting us.

No, says Yeshayahu (in the last pasuk of this week's haftara). That's not the way to go. Rather, **"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things..."**

The Land of Israel is described by the phrase "milk & honey" (20 times in Tanach). Torah is described (once) with the phrase honey & milk.

<10 prayer replacement for a Land flowing with milk & honey

Superman and Batman each have one. So does a matador. CAPE.  
In Hebrew? שְׂכַמֵּיהָ

# Divrei Menachem

In Parshat Va'etchanan, Moshe passionately introduces the significance of keeping the Torah and passing on its teachings to future generations, with the following words: "See I have taught you decrees and ordinances, as Hashem, my G-d, has commanded me, to do so in the midst of the Land which you come to possess. You shall safeguard them and perform them... And [the peoples shall say], 'Which is a great nation that has righteous decrees and ordinances such as the entire Torah that I place before you this day?'" (D'varim 4:5-8).

This compelling edict is worth repeating daily in our hearts and minds, in private and in public. For we are still surrounded by the masses who denigrate our Law (primarily Christians) and by the millions who deny us our Land (primarily Muslims). And also, within our ranks, there are those who question both the validity and totality of the Torah and those who cast doubt on the centrality of Eretz Yisrael in our religious and national experience.

No wonder then that thousands of years later Moshe's clarion call still rings as loud as ever. No wonder Moshe cautions us both to observe Hashem's Law in our Land and to safeguard its very essence.

**another low**

**3,4,9,10<sup>3</sup>,11,[12],13,[14],17,18**

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

## VA'ETCHANAN

### What to Pray for

It is a question that every religious person has been confronted with and confounded by. Even those of us who are not theologically inclined have struggled with this question: Why are my prayers not answered? After all, we do believe in the efficacy of prayer. Why, then, is it so often a frustrating experience?

Every rabbi (myself included) has found himself challenged by very sincere individuals who ask them to explain the point of prayers if they are so seldom answered. I especially remember one such challenge.

It was on a Motza'ei Shabbat some years ago, when I was still with my former synagogue in Baltimore. A group of women would meet every week after Shabbat to recite Tehillim and pray for the sick in the community. Over the months, they had accumulated a long list of individuals who were seriously ill and for whose recovery they fervently prayed.

One week they asked me if I would join them, offer them some words of inspiration, and answer some of their questions. Of course, I complied, delivered a short homily, and opened the floor for questions. Although the questions took a variety of forms, they were best expressed by the individual who

said, "We cry our hearts out in prayer every week, and we feel compassion for every person on our list. But hardly anyone becomes cured, and names come off the list only when the person has died. So what is the point of prayer?"

I do not remember my exact response, but I do remember that it was inadequate.

Later that week, I received a handwritten note in my office mailbox. It began,

"Dear Rabbi Weinreb,

In a recent talk you said that many people complain to you about having said Tehillim for a friend who was ill, but that the prayers didn't help and the person died. They asked if you could explain the point of their prayers."

The woman who wrote the letter was a nurse in the intensive care unit of a local hospital. She obviously spoke from profound personal experience. She went on to say that the reason people find praying frustrating is because they expect a total cure, and that they need to realize that there is much more to pray for with regard to a seriously ill individual than his or her complete recovery.

Here are some of the things she suggested people pray for: that the sick person not suffer too much pain, anxiety, depression, or loneliness; that the sick person be treated gently and with dignity by the medical staff; that the veins of the

sick person be easy to find for intravenous injections; that the family have the strength to hold up under the strain and to not abandon the patient; that the correct decisions, medical and ethical, be taken by the family, patient, doctor, and rabbi.

"If you pray for all of the above for a sick person, you will find that many of your prayers will be answered."

Words of wisdom, for sure. And words that are especially timely in this week's Torah portion of Va'etchanan, which contains the story of Moshe's prayer, and how that prayer was not heeded by the Almighty.

Moshe asked that he be permitted to enter the Promised Land of Israel. His prayers were deep and numerous. Indeed, the sages suggest that he offered no less than 515 prayers. But, as Moses himself tells us, God did not regard his prayers. On the contrary; God told him not to bring the matter up again.

Were the prayers of Moshe indeed not heard at all? If we pay careful attention to the text, as I hope you will this week, dear reader, we come to realize that God did respond with at least two pieces of good news for Moshe. Number one, He granted him the ability to see the land. Not a total fulfillment of Moshe's prayer, surely, but a gift, nonetheless. And number two, and perhaps more importantly, He told him that his successor, Yehoshua, would lead the people into the land and would

help them settle there. A leader who is assured of a competent and successful successor has surely had his prayers answered.

We have, then, an entirely new perspective on prayer. We must pray for a greater range of outcomes and not limit ourselves to asking for total success. We must be satisfied in our prayers for what God has chosen for us. The outcomes may be modest, or even insufficient, from our mortal points of view, but they are substantial if we could but open our minds to them.

A wise man once said, "Be careful what you pray for, because you might just get it!" The truth of that humorous piece of advice is that we are ignorant as to what is good for us. We don't know what we should pray for. How consistent this message is with the lessons I learned from that scribbled note written by a wise congregant many years ago.

We must consider carefully what we pray for and expand our list of requests to cover the entire range of human needs. Only then we will find that it is not that God listens to prayers or ignores them. Rather, in His wisdom, He responds to them selectively. He says "no" to some of our entreaties, but He pronounces "yes" resoundingly to a great deal of what we ask for. □

**It's 13 days later/earlier than itself**

**Called the Camellia Capital of the World**

**The thing to remember without remember**

## VEBBE REBBE

*We are presenting a short series to familiarize the public with issues that our batei din, Eretz Hemdah – Gazit, deal with and their solutions (in condensed and anonymous form).*

**CASE:** The defendant (=D) hired a distinguished law firm (=P) to work on a major project. After P sent D a letter outlining the work and payment guidelines and D responded positively, P began working for D in February '07. One matter that was raised was that billing would be on a quarterly basis. For February-April '07, P billed for 73,000 shekels. In June '07, D met with members of P; one of the issues was D's dissatisfaction with the high fees. D claims that P then set the total fee for successful completion of the project at 100,000 shekels (50,000 to be paid immediately). After much activity from May '07 until February '08, P sent D a bill for 207,000 shekels. D refuses to pay the full amount with the following claims: D did not sign a formal contract with specific sums of money spelled out; the agreement was changed to have a 100,000 shekels cap; D had specified his expectation that a specific senior lawyer would handle the project, while he actually did little work; P did not succeed in the project's goal.

**RULING:** The written communication between the P and D, even if it involved D's representatives, suffices to set the work agreement between the

sides. It specified that they are governed by P's standard practices and rates. While D's response mentioned his trust in a specific lawyer's ability to succeed, it does not stipulate the level of his involvement. It is standard practice at law firms for younger staff members to do most of the work, under the supervision of a seasoned lawyer.

P denies they agreed to change the billing procedure. D brought witnesses only to the fact that he said after the meeting that he was relieved by its outcome, whereas he is required to prove a change was agreed to. The fact that there was a long delay in billing after the meeting fits well with D's claim but falls short of proof.

The main question is whether the delay in billing is a significant breach of contract. Considering the agreed upon fact that D reacted strongly to the quarterly bill of 73,000 shekels, it was clearly and legitimately important to him to realize the mounting costs that reached an additional 207,000 shekels. While small delays should not invalidate a contractual agreement, there must be some cutoff point. We conclude that after five months without billing (Oct '07), D was no longer bound by their written agreement.

Even without a contract, one has to pay for work done on his behalf, but the rate must be determined. There are a few halachic models, none of which fit perfectly here. When one is hired but no rate is discussed, one pays according to the lower rate for such

workers in the field. However, it appears to us that had D known how much this work would cost him, he would not have continued P's employment (he already had full-time legal counsel) so it is not considered working with approval. If the work was slated to be done, he receives the amount that a person would pay for such a job. If not, he is paid no more than expenses (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 375:1). Here it is hard to determine, because he wanted the work done but not at the cost discussed now.

Our case seems more similar to people who ate someone else's meat, thinking it was from their animal. The gemara (Bava Kama 112a) says that they pay at a cheap rate (two thirds of the going rate - Bava Batra 166b) because they would have refrained from eating had they known how much they would have to pay out of pocket. In this case, where D had legal counsel on hand at a lower rate per extra work, one third of the requested payment, starting October '07, suffices.

D's claim that there was no benefit is rejected because P helped in certain areas and also made progress regarding the project, for which they deserved compensation. The fact that afterward things did not work out does not retroactively erase the previous obligation.

**Separate there; a quintet here**

**Moshe's youngest uncle**

**approx. 10,000 species minus 40**

## THE CHALLENGE OF MONEY: WAGES AND LABOR; EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE [part 1]

by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

Although theoretically, labor is an economic resource subject to the same rules which govern other resources, the reality is that we are dealing with people. So nowhere else in the whole field of economics is the admixture of psychology, human welfare, economic self-interest and the social-moral fabric of society more prevalent than in these matters of employer-employee relationships. Ethics, morality and humaneness transform an exercise in costs, supply and demand into a compound of religion, spirituality, morality, materialism and economics.

Employer-employee relationship is a specific instance of contracts binding free agents. The discussion in the Talmud [Bava Metzia, HaSocher et HaPoalim] regarding these relationships, precedes those dealing with the hiring of fields, goods or work animals and all the halakhic factors concerning cancelation of contracts, duress, prices, withdrawal litigation etc. applies here as well. "If the employer hired workers and they wished to withdraw [each may do so]; they have no [financial] claims against each other except TAROMET [moral indignation or communal disapproval] [labor contracts only become valid upon commencement of work or such actions as traveling to work]. Where they would have found alternative

employment earlier but now, as a result of his retraction, they are unemployed, the employer has to pay them wages of a PO'EIL BATEIL [what somebody would pay to enjoy leisure]" (Rambam, Hilkhos S'chirut 9:4). In accordance with the symmetry of Torah justice, the same rules of TAROMET and financial compensation apply when the workers renege. It should be noted that there is no element in this relationship beyond the buying or hiring and selling of services. The employer has no status, social or personal claims on his workers, while there is no justification for defrauding the employer, not even that of politics, class struggle or racism.

The determination of wages is conditioned not only by supply and demand, but equally by society's political, social and educational structure. This structure concerns profit sharing, reducing boredom, outsourcing, employee participation in decision making, etc. Irrespective of attitudes to these factors, questions of workers rights and protection will still persist. The worker would seem to be entitled to special protection regarding his wages and working conditions over and above the normal legalisms regarding contracts. This is primarily a result of his dependence on his wages which makes him vulnerable to delays in payment, legal snarls and sudden changes in the markets. It is to this special protection that Judaism provides a notable contribution of great religious and moral importance, while

its symmetry in justice insists equally on the worker's obligations primarily to render honest labor for his wages.

Halakhically, a creditor may be paid both in currency and what economists call 'near money', such as negotiable instruments, goods, and bonds or stocks. However, this rule was changed regarding workers, although they are considered legally as creditors. Since there may be costs involved in the realization of near money such as transport, commissions, or marketing, the halakha ruled out its use as payment for wages unless it would be to the worker's advantage.

Far more important is the insistence of prompt payment of wages according to the custom, contract or period of employment. Though enjoining prompt payment of wages is phrased in the Torah in terms of a daily wage, they also embraced weekly and monthly payments as these have become prevalent.

Withholding of wages may force employees to depend on expensive consumer credit or become entrapped in a cycle of usurious borrowing. At the same time, the employer has the benefit of free financing from this delayed payment. These possibilities are echoed in the Torah's peculiar phrasing regarding prompt payment: "unto it [wages] he turns his soul" (D'varim 24:14). "This refers to the robber-employer, since he forfeits his life by retaining wages that are the worker's life-blood; it refers to the employee whose life blood was, so to speak, spilt by this withholding" (Bava

Metzia 112a).

"It is a positive mitzva to pay wages on time as it is written, 'on his day shall you give him his wage' (D'varim 24:15). One who delays such payment disregards this mitzvat asei and also transgresses four prohibitions: you shall not oppress; you shall not let the sun go down on it [let the day pass without payment] (D'varim 24:14), you shall not rob; you shall not leave overnight the wages of a day laborer (Vayikra 19:13)" (Hilkhos S'chirut 11:1-2). □

## The Big 10

FYI: The Aseret HaDibrot in Yitro has 172 words and 620 letters. The version in Va'etchanan has 189 words and 708 letters.

We know that the Torah has two "versions" of the Aseret HaDibrot - one in Yitro (Y) and a second one in this week's sedra of Va'etchanan (V). We also are aware that there are differences between the two.

Let's take a closer look. (Having a Chumash in front of you might be useful, if you plan on getting into this topic.)

The first commandment, ANOCHI, is the same in each version. 9 words, all the same.

Second commandment: 50 words, almost identical. Several little differences. PESEL KOL T'MUNA (Y); V'CHOL T'MUNA (V). POKEID AVON

AVOT - ALEF-BET-TAV (Y); ALEF-BET-VAV-TAV (V). AL SHILEISHIM (Y); V'AL SHILEISHIM (V). Last word in #2 is MITZVOTAI in both, but in V there is a K'TIV, with a VAV after the TAV, even though it is pronounced (K'RI) as if the word were spelled with a YUD at the end.

Third commandment: 17 words, exactly the same in Y and V.

Fourth commandment - Shabbat: 55 words in Y; 69 words in V. We are including the texts here with markings to highlight the differences.

**זכור** את־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלַאכְתֶּךָ: וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלַאכָה אֲתָהּ | וּבַיּוֹם וּבַחֹדֶשׁ עֶבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וְבַהֲמִתֶּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם | וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל־כֵּן בָּרַךְ ה' אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וְקִדְשׁוֹ:

**שמור** את־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְשׁוֹ וּכְאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלַאכְתֶּךָ: וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלַאכָה אֲתָהּ | וּבַיּוֹם וּבַחֹדֶשׁ עֶבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ | וְשׂוֹרְךָ וְחֹמְרֶךָ וְכָל־בְּהֵמֶתֶךָ | וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ | כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים יָצַח עֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ כַּמִּוֶּדֶת כִּי עָבַדְתָּ | וְיָמִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּצָּא ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה | וְיָצַח עֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ לְעֵשֶׂת יָמִים וְיָצַח עֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ לְעֵשֶׂת יָמִים:

Not only is there the ZACHOR - SHAMOR difference, but the Y version puts Shabbat in the context of Creation of the World and the V version focuses on the Exodus from Egypt. We see this reflected in Kiddush for Leil Shabbat, which refers to Shabbat as ZIKARON L'MAASEI V'REISHIT, a reminder of Creation, and as ZEICHER LITZI'AT MITZRAYIM, a reminder of the Exodus.

Fifth commandment - honor parents: 15 words in Y and 22 words in V. Here is the V version with the 7 words that are not in Y boxed off.

כָּבֵד אֶת־אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ: כָּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֵמַעַן יֵאָרְיֶךָ וְיִצְלַח לְךָ: הַדְּבָרָה אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ צִוָּה לְךָ:

Commandments six through nine are all part of a single pasuk in both Y and V. 2+2+2+5 = 11 words in each. The differences are the connective VAV that links these commandments in V and their more separate "look" in Y. And, the last word in the bearing-false-witness commandment (#9) is SHEKER in Y and SHAV in V.

Tenth commandment: 15 words in Y; 16 words in V. In V, the connective VAV further links #10 to the previous four, essentially linking the entire left-hand Tablet. This commandment consists of two parshiyot. In Y, each parsha begins with LO TACHMOD. First, it is "your fellow's house". In the second parsha, one must not covet your fellow's wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, donkey - all that belongs to your fellow. In V, the first parsha prohibits coveting your fellow's wife. The second parsha (still within commandment #10), changes the word from covet (TACHMOD) to desire (TIT-AVEH), and the list is his house, his field, manservant, maidservant, ox, donkey, and all that belongs to your fellow.

We have not attempted to explain any of the differences between the Y and V versions of the Aseret HaDibrot. We are just pointing out those differences, so that you might be motivated to ask or research the issue on your own. If

you do find anything interesting, let us know and we'll include it in a TTreaders Feedback column in some future issue of Torah Tidbits.


And another thing...

We did not relate to the differences in the two ways of reading the Aseret HaDibrot - TAAMEI HA-ELYON and TAAMEI HATACHTON. There are some subtle differences when that is taken into account.

On another note:

Most of the Jewish world reads the Aseret HaDibrot in shul with TAAMEI HA-ELYON, the "upper" notes which "present" the Aseret HaDibrot as 10 Statements. Minhag Yerushalayim (MY) is to read the Big 10 in Va-etchanan with TAAMEI HATACHTON, which treats this portion the same as all of the Torah, i.e. as 13 p'sukim, that sound like all p'sukim sound. Less fanfare, which is the point - it lets the Aseret HaDibrot be seen and perceived on the same level as the rest of the Torah. MY reads with TAAMEI HA-ELYON only on Shavuot morning. The "regular" minhag is to always read in public with TAAMEI HA-ELYON.

**The Dutch Elbow to Wrist counter**

 Revenge often backfires in being regarded by its victim as retroactive justification for the wrong which prompted the revenge.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein  
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**The Puah Institute**  
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**Medical Secrets**  
**Diabetes and Shidduchim**

Diabetes is a common condition in which a person has high blood sugar: In Type 1 diabetes the body does not produce enough insulin, if any; people with Type 2 diabetes are insulin-resistant.

Left untreated, diabetes can lead to some extremely serious medical conditions - vision can be adversely affected, as can the kidneys and the heart. At times it may even be fatal. However, with proper diet and medical attention many diabetics live a perfectly normal lifestyle, as long as they are conscious of their health issues at all times.

'Gestational diabetes' affects women during pregnancy. These women need to be on a special diet or take insulin throughout their pregnancies; afterwards, many go back to their previous non-diabetic condition. However, a woman who once had gestational diabetes has a much higher risk of developing the condition later on in life, and needs to be under closer observation than other people in order to preempt its return.

Diabetes is becoming so commonplace that many see it as an epidemic in the Western world, mostly due to our lifestyle. Thus, everyone can potentially develop diabetes; most

people do not even know they have it until they suffer some of the negative side effects. Women who had gestational diabetes and therefore undergo regular testing of their blood sugar are more likely to contract the disease, but are also much more likely to have it diagnosed early on and be able to change their lifestyle and even their lives.

Many questions arise: Does a person need to reveal that she has diabetes when she enters into a shidduch? Does a woman who had gestational diabetes in a previous pregnancy [in a previous marriage] have to disclose her medical history when she remarries?

As in many of our previous examples, the questions are complex and the answers must relate to each individual case. Generally we would say that if a person has good medical care and adjusts her lifestyle accordingly so that she can lead a perfectly normal life, the information need not be stated upfront when she comes to look for a shidduch.

However, since this condition does affect their lives, and may limit them in some ways, it makes good sense for a couple to share this information - clearly, without blowing it out of proportion - before deciding on marriage. Some people may dislike the fact that their spouse has to take insulin daily, and may consider it an impossible situation to live with. They should be told the facts about living with diabetes and its ramifications

before they make any decisions.

There is another important consideration: one of the risk factors for getting diabetes is that it is hereditary. Therefore, someone who has diabetes is likely to pass it on to at least some of his offspring. This is obviously something a potential spouse has the right to know. While a person may objectively decide that he can live with a spouse who has diabetes, he may find it difficult to live with children who have the same disease - for two reasons:

One - Since the decision to marry a person is based on many factors, couples may decide to get married despite known medical conditions because of the exemplary character traits in their prospective spouse that, for them, override the medical problem. A person may make a conscious decision that his marriage partner is worthy and someone with whom he would like to live and raise a family; he therefore may choose to overlook the pre-existing medical history.

This, however true concerning a spouse, may not be true for coming generations. There is a great difference between deciding to marry someone despite his imperfections, and bringing a child into the world who will likely have to face serious medical challenges. With the right lifestyle choices these challenges can be handled, but nevertheless there may still be serious ramifications for the entire family which must be considered.

Second - While adults may understand

and internalize the importance of leading a restricted lifestyle and being very careful about what and when they eat and how they exercise, a child may not. It is not so easy for a child in school to refuse candies distributed for a classmate's birthday, and he may be unwilling and unable to say 'no'. One cannot determine that since he can handle the situation well, his children will have to do the same. Children naturally have a much harder time adjusting to disabilities, and problems may arise. And so it definitely makes sense to discuss all the relevant information with one's potential shidduch when the time is right, since this may well have an impact on the final decision.

## Praying with Passion

Giving more meaning to our T'fillah  
One Week at a Time

Excerpted and reprinted with permission of the author

## Birchot HaShachar

(part one - intro)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁכּוֹי בִּינָה  
לְהִבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.

### Translation:

Blessed are You, HaShem our God, King of the Universe, who gives the heart understanding to distinguish day from night.

### Essential concept:

To start each day with a reaffirmation of our connection to Hashem.

### Insight:

#### Deeper meanings of the theme

By starting our day with the Birchot HaShachar, we embrace anew the world we live in, and recognize each component of it as a new gift from G-d.

The Mishna B'rura states that Chazal formulated these blessings to be said prior to each step of our personal reentry into the living, active world.

One of the most notable aspects of these blessings is that they are said upon the most mundane of our day's activities - getting up, getting dressed, putting on shoes and so forth. These hardly seem like the makings of a spiritual epiphany. Yet if we were to train ourselves to find G-d only in moments of startling beauty or breathtaking awe, our awareness of G-d in our lives would be very limited. Birchot HaShachar teaches us how to take the normal life we live and to feel G-d's holiness and purity in it.

In Sefer Derech Hashem, the Ramchal explains the purpose of blessings:

"Before one makes use of [the benefits of] the world... He should ...consider the true nature of that good - that it is more than just a physical and material pleasure, rather it actually is something from Hashem to bring about genuine good [man's perfection and spiritual elevation]."

Despite the physicality of this world - OLAM HAZEH - it is here, using our physical senses, that we have the greatest ability to move closer to G-d. Our sensory experiences - if we channel them correctly - have the greatest power to arouse our souls.

For example, on Shabbat we make Kiddush on wine, not on Tehillim, even though Tehillim have more holiness. It is our senses - the delight we experience in drinking wine - that can most powerfully stir our recognition of G-d's good.

Through our b'rachot, we train ourselves to become aware that G-d created this entire world for us to enjoy. When we learn to come close to G-d using our senses, our relationship with Him can be as broad and varied as the world around us.

### **Visualize: Bringing the prayer to life**

The life of a two-year old is tough. He wakes up in the morning and longs to jump up out of bed, but alas, he is stuck "behind bars" in his crib until someone has a moment to come free him. He is chilly in his thin summer pajamas, and will remain so until someone dresses him. He is hungry, but he will not be eating until someone feeds him.

The child has a long list of needs, but he is bound and frustrated by the many limitations that prevent him from answering those needs himself. How utterly grateful he feels when help arrives: when he can stand up and run outside, when his mother dresses him in fresh clothes and gives him his breakfast. Every day, he awaits her like a savior, for without her, he would have no real life.

Although we think of ourselves as self-sustaining, we are all like that two-year old child. Until Hashem frees us from the bounds of sleep, gives us

clothing to wear, opens our eyes and sets us on a straight path, we are lying helplessly in bed, barely alive. A child does not stop to think about what his mother does for him but we, Hashem's children, have the gift of b'rachot to enable us to feel His loving care.

### **Take It With You:**

If you've ever sacrificed time, money and effort to buy a gift for someone you love, you probably did it all with eager anticipation of the person's response. You could picture his pleasure and gratitude. But what happens when the gift quickly falls by the wayside? The giver - you - feels that his effort to bring the recipient joy has failed. "Why bother?" you might ask yourself.

Sometimes, however, a recipient's appreciation remains fresh. "I think of you whenever I use the gift you gave me," someone might say. "It gives me so much pleasure."

The daily morning blessings enable us to become like that second, appreciative person. "Blessed are you, Hashem" is our daily recognition of the Ultimate Giver. Although G-d does not need our thanks, by reciting these words meaningfully, we make ourselves happier. We enable ourselves to revel for a moment in the kindness of our Benefactor, to take an accounting of our riches and to feel the warmth and security of being cared for and loved.

### **Towards better Davening and Torah reading**

With the first passage of the Sh'ma coming from Parshat Va'etchanan, a review of several "Pronunciation Flags" will be both towards better davening and towards better Torah reading. And, in the case of Sh'ma, the review is also towards better fulfillment of the mitzva to recite Sh'ma twice daily. Three for the price of one!

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 61:23) states: One must be meticulous in reading the Sh'ma, not to "soften" the "stressed" letters nor "Stress" the "soft" letters, and not to interchange the two types of SH'VAs...

Correct reading of Sh'ma is more than just these issues... as we will see.

SH'MA: As we've explained in the past, English speakers have a particular "problem" with consonant-blends (a.k.a. consonant clusters), because they are so common in English and they don't really exist in Hebrew. The SH and the M sounds in Hebrew should be distinct. The SH'VA NA under the SHIN is a very short vowel sound and should not be dropped (nor should it be exaggerated). The English words (which, ironically, come from Yiddish) shmooze and smear are good contra-examples to SH'MA. In shmooze, the SH and M sounds are blended into one smooth sound. Not so for SH'MA, despite our tendency to say SHMA. The apostrophe indicates a brief vowel sound for the SH, before finishing the word (which

technically has only one syllable) with the MA. So too, SHE-MA is the result of too long a vowel sound for the SH'VA NA, something approaching a SEGOL.

The "warning" to avoid clustering the consonants need not be issued for sounds that don't blend well. For example, at the end of the first passage of Sh'ma we find M'ZUZOT. The M and Z sounds don't naturally blend, so even English speakers will put a brief vowel sound for the M' before continuing with the ZUZOT. On the other side of the coin, we still should not overdo the SH'VA sound, giving the MEM more than it should have - the fact that people will transliterate the word as MEZUZOT, notwithstanding. It really should be written as M'ZUZOT (so too, M'NORA), but MEZUZA and MENORA are so common, that it makes M'NORA (etc.) look awkward. Another good example for this warning is the word B'RACHA. The B and R sound melt together so easily (for English speakers) because of the abundance of BR words: brother, bread, brain, brake, brim... The correct Hebrew pronunciation requires a (very) slight break (not b'reak) after the BET/SH'VA - B'RACHA. Neither BRACHA nor BERACHA (even if people write the word that way).

Apologies (not really) for emphasizing and elaborating on this point, but we are talking about an extremely important word - SH'MA.

Of course, before moving on to the next word, we should also remind people not to swallow the AYIN sound at the end of the word SH'MA. This is a particularly problematic point for Ashkenazim who would say: What AYIN sound? We've lost the guttural sound of the AYIN, which those of Eidot Mizrach pronounce effortlessly. We (Ashkenazim) mostly do not distinguish between ALEF and AYIN. Technically, we should. But we are "excused" because of linguistic evolution (made up phrase; not yet Googled to see if someone previously made up the same phrase). More to come...

## Portion from the Portion

### Pray and Pray Again

I saw an advertisement in the paper for an all women play for women only, in the Old City, about the story of the destruction of the Temple. I thought this would be a good way to get my daughters into the mood of Tish'a b'Av. I called up to find out more information, specifically, if it was appropriate for children, and after hearing all the details I decided to order tickets. They took my name and phone number over the phone but didn't ask for any money and said we could pay at the door. I thought that was a bit strange - who doesn't ask for a credit card number when someone orders tickets - but I quickly forgot about it as I dragged my daughters out of the house rushing them through the hot

crowded Old City streets. We got to the theatre a bit late and found a line of people outside. Although they had reservations, they were not allowed in, since their tickets had been sold to people who came on time or early. As you can imagine, there was a long line of disgruntled people who had gone especially out of their way to see this show. We didn't want to hang around hearing all those arguments, especially since we were told that there wasn't any place for the next show - all the tickets had been reserved - and we had no chance to get in. Basically we gave up on seeing that show.

While sitting around pondering what to do instead of going to the show, a friend past by. I remembered she had some connection to the theatre group and asked if there was any way to get us into the show. I took our chance meeting as a heavenly sign that I shouldn't give up so easily on seeing that show. To make a long story short - we went back and managed to get into the theatre and were all glad that we had been persistent and hadn't given up.

Of course, this episode reminded me about something from the Torah portion of the week. At the beginning of the sedra we find that Moshe prays to Hashem VA'ETCHANAN el HASHEM... We are told that he prayed to Hashem as many times as the numerical value of the word VA'ETCHANAN. Moshe prayed 515 prayers to be let into the Holy Land. Most of us might have given up after 10 maybe 20 prayers, but Moshe kept asking. He was very persistent.

This is the key to accomplishment.

And yet, even with all the prayers Moshe uttered, his prayers are not answered. He is not allowed to go into Israel. The Abarbanel asks how could it be possible that a prayer to G-d, especially one from Moshe Rabeinu, come back unfulfilled?

Our Rabbis teach us that Moshe's prayer was answered - if not fully, at least partially. In B'rachot 32b it states, "Prayer is better than good deeds since you don't have someone who did more good deeds than Moshe but he wasn't granted his request except because of his prayers". Moshe asked for two things " EBRA... V'EREH (3:25) Please let me cross the Jordan. Let me see the good land. He may not have been allowed to enter the land, but he was allowed to see it (:27). He gets to see all parts of it. We must never give up. We must be persistent and pray and continue to pray. Those prayers have an effect on ourselves and on the whole world. We may not know how, but they always do.

Since Moshe's prayers are answered by being able to SEE the land, here is a recipe for MRS. SEE'S FUDGE - an oldie but goodie.

### MRS. SEE'S FUDGE

- 3 (6 oz.) pkg. chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup butter
- 3 Tbsp. vanilla
- 1 cup walnuts (optional)
- 4-4½ cups white sugar

1 can evaporated milk (1⅔ cups)

Mix chips, butter, and vanilla in large bowl. In large heavy pan, boil 4½ cups sugar and evaporated milk (6 minutes). Pour the sugar and milk over chip mixture, stir until chips are melted; add nuts if desired. Pour into 9x13 inch pan. Allow to set several hours.

לֹא הָיוּ יָמִים טוֹבִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּהַמִּשְׁפָּה לְעֵשֶׂר בְּאָב...

In the last Mishna of Taanit, Rabban Shimon b. Gamliel tells us that there were no more joyous festivals in Israel than TU b'Av and Yom Kippur.

In the middle of this "tragic" month, the month whose entrance was accompanied by the diminishing of our joy, we find the most joyous of festivals.

If you will ponder the various reasons for TU b'Av, you can see in each one a message of consolation and promise... and joy.

- In the aftermath of the "Sin of the Spies", G-d decreed that the entire adult male population of that generation should die out during 40 years of wandering. Not only was this decree handed down on Tish'a b'Av, but the "sentence" was carried out on Tish'a b'Av each year. Tradition tells us that each year on the 9th of Av, the men of Israel would dig graves and sleep in them. In the morning, Moshe would announce "let the living separate from the dead". Each year, approximately 15,000 men were thus buried, the others living on for at least

another year. In the final year of wandering, none of the remaining 15,000 dies. Not on Tish'a b'Av eve, nor the next night, nor the next. The people thought that perhaps they had erred in the calculation of the days of the month, but when the full moon of Av took its place in the sky, all joyously realized that the decree against the remaining men had been rescinded through G-d's mercy. The 15th of Av was thus marked as a day of joy. It marks the existence of forgiveness, even from very serious sins.

- TU b'Av was the end of the season for wood-gathering for the Mizabei'ach. After this date, the power of the sun begins to diminish due to the shortening of the day. Since it is essential that the wood for the fires of the Mizbei'ach be free of worms and insects, it was feared that after TU b'Av the wood might not sufficiently dry out to avoid infestation. The end of the wood-gathering season was an occasion for special korbanot in the Mikdash, and TU b'Av was celebrated as a family festival by those involved in this mitzva.

Note that just as Tish'a b'Av and TU b'Av were opposite sides of the same coin vis-a-vis the Sin of the Spies, so too are they here - in that Tish'a b'Av marks destruction of the Temple; TU b'Av celebrates wood gathering for the Beit HaMikdash.

- Following the terrible episode of the "pilegash from Giv'a", there was a ban on marrying into the tribe of

Binyamin. This ban was lifted on a TU b'Av.

- For a long period of time, due to a misunderstanding in the rulings concerning who the daughters of Tz'lofchad should marry, there was little or no inter-tribal marriage. After a later Sanhedrin clarified the issue, inter-tribal marriages became commonplace. This reuniting of all of Israel, was associated with TU b'Av, and the cause of great joy.

- The mishna referred to above, tells us that the young maidens of Jerusalem would wear borrowed white dresses, so as not to embarrass one who had no dress... and they would dance in the vineyards.. (so that eligible young men might choose their brides).

The two items mentioned above, and the fact that there have not been weddings during the Three Weeks (or at least the Nine Days), combine to make TU b'Av a special day for Shidduchim and marriages, and a truly joyous day.

- Following the fall of Beitar about 65 years after the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash (on a Tish'a b'Av, non-coincidentally), the Romans did not permit the bodies of the dead Jews to be buried, as a punishment for rebelling against and resisting Rome. A few years later, a new emperor allowed burial of the bodies. Tradition records that this was on the 15th of Av. The bodies were found not to have decayed in the years that they lay

unburied. The Sanhedrin at Yavne declared this a miracle and composed the fourth bracha of Birkat HaMazon - HaTov V'haMeitiv, to thank G-d for His kindnesses, even in darkest of times. (See Rabbi Sprecher's article for more on this topic.)

- On a TU b'Av, Hoshea ben Elah removed the roadblocks set up by Yeravam ben Navat that prevented the people of the northern kingdom from traveling to Yerushalayim for Aliya L'Regel.

We can see an interesting common factor in all the different aspects of TU b'Av. Each item is in some way another side of a Tish'a b'Av coin. Churban and exile vs. a way back to Yerushalayim and the Mikdash. Decree against Dor HaMidbar vs. they stopped dying off in the last year of wandering. Fall of Beitar vs. burial of the victims. Sin'at Chinam vs. reconciliation. And more.

On another note: TU b'Av is the deadline for planting grapes (for example) so that the current year will be counted as the first year of growth. Halacha considers that it takes two weeks for the plants to take firm hold of the soil and the following month is considered sufficient time to count as a full year. If the deadline is missed, then the ORLA period is a full three more years. So planting by TU b'Av "saves" a year until the fruit will be available to eat.

TU b'Av cannot fall on a Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday. This is the

same calendar arrangement as the 7th day of Pesach, Jerusalem's Purim, and Yom HaAtzmaut. (Make your own "vort" from this calendar fact.)

## ParshaPix explanations

⚡⚡ Upper left is a plus and minus in a negation circle. The Torah forbids (a few times) adding to the Torah or detracting from it.

⚡⚡ Once again, the Torah tells us of the mitzva to designate cities of refuge - 3 on the east side of the Jordan (and 3 on the west side).

⚡⚡ The LUCHOT in the TORAH on the mountain stands for the repetition of the Aseret HaDibrot (with differences) and reminds us that the whole Torah was given by G-d at Sinai, not just the Big Ten.

⚡⚡ Mezuzah is one of the mitzvot from Va'etchanan, from the first parsha of the SH'MA. [The first two parshiyot of Sh'ma are in a Mezuzah and the mitzva of Mezuzah is in each of those parshiyot. Probably make a nice TTriddle with this, but...]

⚡⚡ Shabbat candlesticks represent SHAMOR and ZACHOR. They are contained B'DIBUR ECHAD, in one speech-bubble. [And the bullets of these ParshaPix explanations are here for the same reason (just without a speech bubble).]

⚡⚡ The hearing ear represents SH'MA, not just the famous one, but the many times the Torah commands us to listen (and understand - this is an important aspect of SH'MA).

🕍 The warning lights represent Moshe's warnings to us to remain faithful to HaShem and not to be confused by what we witnessed but cannot totally comprehend.

🕍 The big number one is for HaShem Echad, as well as the other pasuk that emphasizes G-d's Unity, 4:35, ...there is none besides Him.

🕍 The reminder-finger is for the command to never forget the Sinai experience and to pass on the memory to future generations.

🕍 The Seder plate is for the Chacham's question and the answer of We were slaves to Par'o in Egypt... both of which are found in Va'etchanan.

🕍 The Simchat Torah scene is for the pasuk ATA HOR-EITA LADA'AT... which is associated with Simchat Torah (for Nusach Ashkenaz daveners; in Nusach S'fard, the pasuk is said on all Shabbatot and Chagim).

🕍 The speaker and an Xed out video monitor: On that great day of Revelation at Sinai, we HEARD what was said, but we did NOT SEE any image. This is mentioned more than once, and is a reason for Moshe's deep concern and warnings to the people.

🕍 The (clock) face in the face is for the term PANIM BIFANIM, the description of the direct, intimate communication of G-d to the people of Israel.

🕍 The space telescope is for

Yeshayahu's words at the end of the Haftara: Lift your eyes heavenward and see Who created these... This serves as positive motivation for our study of nature...

🕍 The pen is for the 5 PENs in the sedra and another two U'FENs. Not so remarkable, but they are associated with the remember - don't forget things that Moshe talks about. Hence, the PEN near the reminder string on the finger image in the ParshaPix.

🕍 Then there is the grasshopper. The word K'CHAGAVIM, like grasshoppers, appears only twice in Tanach. Back in Parshat Shlach, the Meraglim told the people about the giants in the land, "we felt like grasshoppers (compared with them) and so were we in their eyes". Commentaries point critically to this statement. The other place the word appears is Yeshayahu 40 - the haftara of Va'etchanan - Nachamu. In that context, the inhabitants of Earth are called grasshoppers in perspective of the "One Who sits above the circle of the earth".

🕍 Extended pinky is for V'ZOT HATORAH... said when the Torah is lifted at the conclusion of each Torah reading. The words are from Va'etchanan.

🕍 The palm is for the way Ashkenazim cover their eyes for the first pasuk of Sh'ma.

🕍 The three fingers form the letter

SHIN and is the way S'faradim cover their eyes for Sh'ma. The three-fingered SHIN on their forehead and the pinky and thumb tips in the corner of each eye. [The names of the five fingers "involved" in reciting the first pasuk of SH'MA are BOHEN, ETZBA, AMA, K'MITZA and ZERET. Numerically, they add up to 1118, the gimatriya of that very same SH'MA pasuk. BTW, T'hilim 20:10 is a gimatriya twin - ה' הוֹשִׁיעַה הַמַּלְאָךְ יַגִּידוּ בַיּוֹם קִרְאָתוֹ

🕍 Towards the upper-right corner, with the hands, is a grain of OAT, representing the T'filin, which are/is an OT which we bind upon our arms. Or Shabbat, which we learn elsewhere is an OT between G-d and B'nei Yisrael.

🕍 Last year we had a picture of Edgar Allan Poe. This year, we used representations of three of his works - The Raven, The Black Cat, and The Pit and the Pendulum. All representing the word PO. PO - meaning here - is not a rare word in the Torah, but its two occurrences in Va'etchanan are significant. First, that the covenant between G-d and the Jewish People is not just with our ancestors, but with those who are HERE (PO) TODAY. That includes us. The other PO refers to the fact that Moshe remained with G-d PO (on Sinai) to be taught all of Torah.

🕍 We'll leave two of the pictographs as Unexplaineds.

## Parsha Points to Ponder

### Suggested answers

1) The Or HaChayim explains that Moshe knew that had he built the Bet HaMikdash, this would have caused problems since G-D would then not be able to destroy that building as a punishment for their sins, as our Sages teach, and He would have to punish the people directly. Moshe reasoned that G-D would not want him to enter the land since his building the Temple would have been bad for the people. Thus, Moshe pre-empted this by declaring that he would only go in and SEE the land but would not build the Bet Hamikdash.

2) The Kli Yakar understands that these words are not a new command but an explanation of the previous one. The Torah just taught not to add on to laws (LO TOSIFU). The reason for this law is now explained: DO NOT LESSEN - Adding on to laws will lead to people not observing the laws which they have to observe.

3) The S'forno explains that OBSERVE SHABBAT refers to the laws of rest on Shabbat. The next words, AS G-D COMMANDED YOU, refers to the positive things which G-D wants us to do while resting on Shabbat such as prayer and Torah study.

## THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW

Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 527

## Did the Product Comply with the Sample

A recent case that came before the National Beth Din in Jerusalem and is recorded in their decided cases. Mrs. Goldstein went to the Elite Furniture company showroom and selected from a catalogue a dining room table and four matching chairs. She and the salesman agreed upon a price and she paid him 500NIS down

and gave him a post-dated check for 1900 NIS for a month hence for the balance of the price. She pleads that she instructed the salesman not to put the check into the bank but she would pay him by cash over a period of time. The salesman on the date of the check put the check in his bank and the check was returned for insufficient funds. The salesman sues for the balance due and she counterclaims that the legs of the table do not match the legs on the chairs and she wants the salesman to exchange the table and to correct the stitching on the upholstered parts of the chair that she alleges was poorly done and do not match the design of the chairs. To bolster her claim that it was poorly done she cited the opinion of her husband who is an upholster by trade. She claims that as soon as the salesman will correct the situation by giving her a table that matches the chairs and repairs the upholstery on the chairs she will pay him the balance. She admits that in the interim she is using the table and chairs but claims she has no alternative since these are the only table and chairs in her apartment. The salesman alleges that she selected the table and chairs from a catalogue and these are precisely the table and chairs and they were in the catalogue. He produces the order for the furniture that she signed and it shows the furniture that were delivered to her. The salesman also denies that she immediately upon receiving the furniture demanded that it be taken back and her money refunded. He alleges that this happened after several weeks during which time she used the furniture. As for the workmanship, the salesman alleges that the design that she now disapproves of is the precise design that she ordered but that there is only one way this could be transferred to the chairs and they did it that way. The holding of the Beit Din describes the situations where the purchaser can void the purchase where the product does not match the sample. But in this

case he showed her the designs and told her it would not be exactly as seen in the catalogue since in the catalogue it was not shown on a piece of furniture. As for the difference in design she let the furniture into her house and used the furniture for a short period of time before she complained, this would constitute a waiver on her part to reject the difference in design. Furthermore had she complained immediately the salesman could have immediately picked up the furniture and could still sell them as new, but now that she waited and first used the furniture it would be used furniture in his store and that would be a loss for which he is not responsible. The Beit Din found in favor of the store owner. The fact that the purchaser gave her check and did not stop payment of the postdated check before its thirty days were up showed that she had waived her rights to complain in a timely fashion.

## Tu B'Av – Why the Celebration?

Guest article by

### Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

The Gemara says in Taanit (30b) that no days were more joyous for the Jewish people than the Fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur. What was so special about the Fifteenth of Av? There are several opinions in the Gemara. According to one opinion, this was the day on which those killed in Beitar, were brought to burial. When the Romans slaughtered the people of Beitar, they left their corpses to rot in the sun, but on the Fifteenth of Av, the Jewish people were given permission to bury Beitar's dead. Therefore, it was a day of surpassing joy. On that day

they instituted the blessing, HaTov VeHaMeitiv in Birkat HaMazon. G-d is called "Good" because He did not allow the corpses to decompose, and He is called "Beneficent", because G-d induced the Romans to allow the bodies to be buried.

This is what the Gemara says. It is a baffling Gemara. Can we even imagine the horrible scene in Beitar? The carnage was unbelievable. Hundreds of thousands of dead literally lined the streets. You are coming upon this catastrophic scene to bury the dead. This was the most joyous day? How could the Gemara consider that day the height of joy?

To understand this perplexing statement, we must put this Gemara into historical context. When did the burial of the dead in Beitar take place? It was 62 years after the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash, after the people were driven into exile and after the uprising of Bar Kochba was crushed. It was after Rabbi Akiva had proclaimed Bar Kochba to be the Moshiach. Every hope, every prospect of relief and redemption had been destroyed by the Roman tyranny and brutality. The Jewish people felt that the Almighty had abandoned them, and that He no longer cared about them, and that they were all alone, deserted and friendless, and they were despondent. Nothing had gone their way. They felt that their situation was hopeless.

When they walked into Beitar to bury the dead, they saw a wonderful miracle. The hundreds of thousands of dead bodies had not decomposed. The

air was not filled with the sickly stench of death. Then they realized that G-d had indeed not abandoned them, that He still cared about them. They realized that they had been mistaken, that they were not alone, and they were overcome with joy such as they had not felt in many years.

What is the greatest consolation? The knowledge that we are never alone, that G-d is always there with each and every one of us.

As King David says in Ps. 139:8, "If (after I die) I go to heaven, You are there, but even if I go to Hell-Sheol (from the root "shaal" - to ask, where inquiry is made of the dead), You are also there." G-d never abandons a Jew not even in Hell. This fact is the greatest source of comfort and joy.

**CHIZUK AND IDUD**  
*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra  
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -  
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

The mitzva of honoring our parents is mentioned twice in the Torah - once in Parshat Yitro and again in Parshat Vaetchanan. What's interesting is the phrase following the commandment in each of these two parshiot. Whereas in Yitro, the Torah tells us that honoring our parents will assure us long life ...L'MA'AN YA'ARICHUN YAMECHA, in Vaetchanan, it says KA'ASHER TZIVCHA HASHEM ELOKECHA ... as Hashem has commanded you. What does the Torah want to teach that by honoring our parents we are following a G-d given commandment?

Most people would probably agree that

they feel a moral obligation to repay their debt of gratitude to parents for all that they have done for them. However, the Torah wants us to know that this is not the proper motivation for honoring parents. Most likely, the Torah waited until Parshat Va'etchanan when the Jewish people had completed their forty years in the desert to better understand this mitzva. During those years in the desert, raising children was easier than at any time before or any time since! Children did not have to be fed - there was manna from heaven! They never had to be given to drink - there was always water from Miriam's well! Parents never had to buy their children any new shoes or clothing because nothing ever wore out! And yet, the Torah still demanded that parents be honored. Clearly, the obligation was only to obey Hashem's commandment rather than for any other reason. By the time the Jewish people had lived through their 40 years in the desert, they could now relate to the mitzva of honoring parents as an independent obligation.

What is the essence of honoring one's parents? HaRav S.R. Hirsch describes KIBDU AV VA'EIM as "the willing acceptance by children from the hands of their parents of the traditions that they have faithfully attempted to transmit to them." Rav Hirsch describes Hashem as our father who took us out of Egypt and then presented us with His Torah. The latter represents the two basic facts in the history of the Jewish people. All that has followed has become part of the MESORAH that each generation of parents has transmitted to its children.

Parshat Va'etchanan is always Shabbat Nachamu, which marks the beginning of a period of comfort and consolation following Tish'a b'Av. It is a good time to stop and appreciate our ability to freely visit and learn about the events and places in Israel that make up so much of our Jewish history. My Rav, Rabbi Berel Wein, never fails to take advantage of an opportunity in a shiur or lecture to remind his listeners of how grateful we all have to be to have Eretz Yisrael. Those who have some or all of their children living in Israel should be MAKIR TOV for successfully transmitting to them the importance of the mitzva of YISHUV HAARETZ. I find these thoughts very comforting at this time of the year.

Dr. Ronald Wachtel, Jerusalem



Last issue's (D'varim) TTriddles:

**[1] Leader of former independent Communist country**

Way back, when Russia and its satellite countries dominated the map of Europe, they were usually colored red. There was one additional country in Europe that was colored pink, which meant that it too was Communist, but not part of the Soviet bloc. All this is a thing of the past now - both the Soviet Union and its satellites as well as the "pink" country, Yugoslavia. The longtime leader of Yugoslavia was Josip Broz Tito, who was its president from 1953-1980. TITO is a rarish word (once in D'varim and

twice in Yirmiyahu) meaning "to give him" (into your hands - referring to Sichon, king of Cheshbon. Sometimes a word jumps out of the sedra and says TTriddle me. TITO did that.

**[2] Pinchas deflected words or things**

D'VARIM means words or things. On the Monday of Shabbat Parshat D'varim, when we would usually have read the first part of D'varim, we instead read the Torah reading of Rosh Chodesh (since that day was, in fact, Rosh Chodesh Av). The R"Ch reading comes from Parshat Pinchas, so we can say that Pinchas deflected words or things.

**[3] sneer at ski or ski at sneer?**

To sneer at ski doesn't really have any meaning, but to ski at sneer, does. This is so because the Torah tells us that the Emori called Mt. Chermon, SNIR. The answer to the TTriddle, then is Ski ar S'nir.

**[4] First of the fifth, first of the fifth**

Just an observation, turned into a TTriddle. Last Shabbat we read the first (portion) of the fifth (book of the Torah), i.e. Parshat D'varim. For the haftara, we read the first (chapter) of the fifth (book of the Prophets), namely YESHAYAHU (which follows Yehoshua, Shoftim, Sh'mu'el, and M'lachim).

**[5] Unexplaineds**

On the right-hand side of the ParshaPix, from the top, we find the letter L made up of two drums. That makes it a TOFEL, one of the places (which commentaries say was not an actual place but rather an allusion, together with LAVAN, of the complaining and disrespect about the manna.

Below the X which is below the TOF-L are the pictures of the six characters from the game, CLUE, with the focus on Mrs. White. White represents LAVAN (see above) and the X marks the spot BEIN TOFEL V'LAVAN. (This takes the phrase out of context and changes the meaning of the pasuk to "between Tofel and Lavan - which is not what it says, but which is the meaning of the X between the two).

Which brings us to the other Unexplained - the basketball backboard with the number 2 touching the rim of the basket. Both the number and the rim are red, which is an old reminder of Russia. So we take the Russian word for "two", which is D'VA and combine it with the English word RIM and we get D'VARIM.